

Message Text

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ACTION ITF-05

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6681

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 716

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMG

SUBJ: RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

REF: STATE 97854

TO AMBASSADOR BROWN FROM AMBASSADOR WEISS

1. "BAHAMIANIZATION" IS A MAJOR TENET OF DOMESTIC BAHAMIAN POLICY AND WILL PROVIDE THE BACKDROP FOR GCOB CONSIDERATION OF ANY APPROACH WE MAKE REQUESTING THAT THE BAHAMAS ACCEPT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEES OF BUSINESSES OF ALL KINDS HAVE HAD TO LEAVE THE BAHAMAS UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT TO HIRE LOCALLY. THE POLICY IS ENFORCED BY A WORK PERMIT SYSTEM WHICH IS STRICTLY ADMINISTERED (AND SOMETIMES CAPRICIOUSLY SO). IN ADDITION, THE BAHAMAS FOR ALL ITS COMPARATIVE WEALTH AND SOPHISTICATION MAY NOT BE RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING AN ORIENTAL COMMUNITY WHICH WOULD IN EFFECT TAKE THE PLACE OF A CHINESE COMMUNITY WHICH LEFT AS A RESULT OF "BAHAMIANIZATION".

2. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE NEEDS WHICH THE BAHAMAS HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO MEET FROM ITS OWN HUMAN RESOURCES AND WHICH, IF
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EMPHASIZED IN OUR PRESENTATION, MAY OFFER SOME HOPE FOR A

POSITIVE RESPONSE. THOUGH CLEARLY A NEED FOR SUCH SKILLS EXISTS, AT LEAST TWO CATEGORIES ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE EXCLUDED BY THE BAHAMIANS. THESE WOULD INCLUDE WORKERS AT THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE EMPLOYMENT SCALE WHO WOULD BE SEEN BY THE GCOB AS NO DIFFERENT FROM JAMAICANS AND HAITIANS WHOM GCOB ALREADY IS TRYING TO RESTRICT, AND MANAGERS, WHICH HAS BEEN AREA OF MAJOR INTEREST IN BAHAMIANIZATION. WE ARE THUS LEFT WITH PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE, AGRICULTURISTS, AND SKILLED WORKERS. IF THE US WERE TO OFFER TO SUBSIDIZE WHATEVER RETRAINING IS NECESSARY, GCOB MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN DOCTORS AND TEACHERS. FARMING IS SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT HERE FROM THE FAR EAST AND TRANSFERENCE OF THE VIETNAMESE EXPERIENCE TO THE BAHAMAS PROBABLY WOULD BE UNLIKELY. NEVERTHELESS, GCOB IS PLACING A MAJOR EFFORT BEHIND AN ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP "SELF SUFFICIENCY" IN FARM PRODUCTS. THIS IS A DOUBTFUL VENTURE, AT BEST, BUT IS SECURING GOVERNMENT BACKING AS EVIDENCED IN THE SUPPORT FOR OUR AID PROJECT. THOUGH IT IS A LONG SHOT, I WOULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE GCOB ACCEPTING VIETNAMESE FARMERS IF CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE MET: (A) SETTLEMENT ON OUT-ISLANDS, (B) RETRAINING AS REQUIRED TO BE DONE BY U.S., (C) PROVISION OF US AID FOR SETTLEMENT AND ASSISTANCE TO NEW FARMERS AND (D) SOME INCREASE IN THE EXISTING AID PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURAL AID TO GCOB FOR ITS OWN FARMING COMMUNITY. (WE HAVE OF COURSE FIRMLY TURNED ASIDE ANY NOTION OF ADDITIONAL AID FUNDS WHENEVER PREVIOUS FEELERS HAVE BEEN EXTENDED.) AS A SEPARATE THOUGHT, AGRICULTURAL SCIENTISTS ARE NEEDED AND MIGHT BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT MAJOR US SIDE INDUCEMENTS REQUIRED FOR INTRODUCTION OF FARMERS. FINALLY, THERE IS A SHORTAGE IN THE BAHAMAS OF ELECTRICIANS, PLUMBERS, MECHANICS, ETC. AS WELL AS INSTRUCTORS IN THESE FIELDS.

3. ASIDE FROM APPROACH DESCRIBED PARA 2 RE FARMERS, WERE US TO SUPPLEMENT ITS REQUEST TO GCOB BY INDICATING WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH GCOB (AND PAY ANY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROGRAM) TO SELECT THOSE REFUGEES WHO WOULD BE COMPATIBLE WITH PRESENT NEEDS (PROFESSIONALS, SKILLED LABORERS AND SCIENTISTS) WE MAY BE ABLE TO ELICIT DESIRED FAVORABLE RESPONSE, BUT EVEN THEN WE ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC.
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